

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

California Coastal Commission Obtains \$25,000 Penalty to Open Public Access Trail in Asilomar Dunes

Pacific Grove, CA, May 20, 2002 – A former owner of a property in the Asilomar Dunes agreed to pay a penalty of \$25,000 for violations of the Coastal Act that include grading environmentally sensitive habitat areas and failing to comply with the terms of his coastal development permit to build a house in the Asilomar Dunes. The fine money has been received and deposited in the Violation Remediation Fund at the California Coastal Conservancy. The California Coastal Commission has designated use of the penalty to facilitate the opening and development of a trail across the property and possibly adjacent areas.

The property is located between Asilomar State Beach and the Point Piños Lighthouse Reservation. The site is considered as potential or known habitat for several endangered or threatened plant species (Monterey spineflower, Tidestrom's lupine and Menzie's wallflower) and the California black legless lizard, listed as a species of special concern by the state. The former owner, Stephen J. L. Page, performed unauthorized grading and stockpiled sand in environmentally sensitive habitat areas. He also graded without first installing fences to protect sensitive habitat areas and without taking steps to protect the black legless lizard.

The Coastal Commission issued a Cease and Desist Order against Page to order him to perform certain steps to restore the impacted area and to comply with the conditions of the permit to build a house at the property. In order to resolve related litigation, the Commission subsequently entered into a settlement agreement in which Page agreed to pay a fine of \$25,000. The Commission's enforcement staff is working to make sure that the new owner of the property properly restores the site.

"Enforcement is an essential element of a strong coastal protection program," said Sara Wan, Chair of the Commission. "This case is an excellent example of the resolve of the Commission to protect sensitive resources and provide a fair and level playing field for all applicants. Applicants need to know that those who ignore permit conditions will be required to restore the impacts of their actions and pay a penalty as well. It is particularly fitting that in this case, the funds will be used to improve public access to the coast."

The primary mission of the Coastal Commission, as the lead agency responsible for carrying out California's federally approved coastal management program, is to plan for and regulate land and water uses in the coastal zone consistent with the policies of the Coastal Act. The California Legislature declared that one of the basic goals of the Coastal Act is to "protect, maintain, and where feasible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the coastal zone environment and its natural and artificial resource." In 2000, the Legislature approved funding for an expanded enforcement program to improve resolution of violations of coastal development permits and unpermitted development in the coastal zone.

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